

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Substitute Figures 5 and 12 are submitted herein which incorporate the changes noted in those figures in the previously filed amendment, and which were approved.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6-8, 10, 11, 13-15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 25, 29, 30, and 31 are pending in this application. Claims 2, 5, 9, 12, 16, 19, 22-24, and 26-28 are canceled without prejudice by the present response.

Claims 1-4, 8-11, and 21-30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. patent 4,641,350 to Bunn in view of U.S. patent 5,850,466 to Schott. Claims 7, 14, 24, and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Bunn in combination with Schott as applied to Claims 1 and 8, and further in view of U.S. patent 4,547,800 to Masaki. Claims 15-18 and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Bunn in combination with Schott, and further in view of U.S. patent 6,175,953 to Scepanovic et al. (herein "Scepanovic"). Claims 6, 13, and 20 were objected to as dependent upon rejected base claims, but were noted as allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of their base claims and any intervening claims.

Initially, applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication of the allowable subject matter of claims 6, 13, and 20.

Addressing now the above-noted rejections, those rejections are traversed by the present response.

It is initially noted that each of the claims is amended by the present response to clarify features recited therein. For example, independent claim 1 is amended by the present response to now specifically recite an operation of "comparing a center pixel of the real pattern window to a center pixel of the selected design pattern window". That subject matter is fully supported by the original specification, see for example original claim 4 and the

original specification at page 15, line 5, as examples. The other independent claims are also now similarly amended as in independent claim 1 noted above.

According to the claimed invention, an operation takes place for comparing a real pattern window to a design pattern window or shifted design pattern window. A further comparison takes place of a center pixel of the real pattern window to the center pixel of the design pattern window or shifted design pattern window. Thereby, in the claimed invention the pattern inspection of the inspection object is performed based on a comparison result, e.g. for each pixel.

With the claimed invention, the first comparison between the real pattern window and the (shifted) design pattern window can be performed to correct a position of a design pattern window, and then a second comparison between a center pixel of the real pattern window and the center pixel of the selected design pattern window (i.e., the design window of which the position is corrected) is performed to inspect the inspection object, e.g. at each of pixels.

Bunn discloses a technique for dividing an image window into a plurality of sub-windows, and matching a divided sub-window with another window to inspect the object. However, Bunn does not disclose or suggest after such comparison utilizing a further comparison for comparing a center pixel of a real pattern window to a selected design pattern window to inspect an inspection object.

Moreover, no teachings in Schott can overcome the deficiencies in Bunn.

Schott discloses a technique for moving sub-pixels of a test image to compare a real image. However, Schott also does not disclose or suggest after such a comparison comparing a center pixel of a real pattern window to a selected design pattern window, to inspect an inspection object. Thus, Schott does not overcome the above-noted deficiencies of Bunn.

In such ways, no combination of teachings of Bunn in view of Schott is believed to render obvious the presently claimed subject matter.

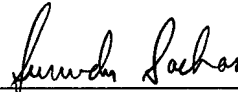
Moreover, no teachings in the further references to Masaki or Scepanovic can overcome the above-noted deficiencies of Bunn in view of Schott.

In such ways, each of the currently pending claims is believed to distinguish over the applied art.

As no other issues are pending in this application, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and it is hereby respectfully requested that this case be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Eckhard H. Kuesters
Registration No. 28,870
Surinder Sachar
Registration No. 34,423
Attorneys of Record

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 08/03)
EHK:SNS/bu\la

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